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Questions "African-American" Raises

In view of the discussions going on around the country about what we Africans in America are to call ourselves and what we are to be called, it is appropriate that we speak of the implications of the term, "African-American," and talk about some applications of the term.

What does "African-American" say about African people in this country? It says that we have a dual heritage, that our ancestors were indigenous to the continent of Africa, that we have some physical characteristics that identify us as having this African ancestry, and that we are of American birth and are citizens of the U.S. But in addition to this obvious meaning of the term, there are its implications. And it is in the case of these implications that "African-American" presents problems.

When we say we are "African-Americans," we are doing more than saying something about where we were born and where our ancestors were born. We are speaking of identification. We are telling ourselves and others that we identify with Africa and with America. For some of us, this is no problem. But for those of us for whom history is important and the events of the past usher into the present certain moral imperatives, an identification with America - as a political entity, not as merely a chunk of land - does present difficulties. We ask ourselves how this part of America we call the "United States" came to be. Knowing history, we understand that there were people - the Cherokee, Arapaho, Seminole, Sioux, Dine, et al - were driven from their tribal nations in this country by slaughter and trickery by Europeans, whose descendants in this day tend to think of themselves as "the true Americans."

So we understand that, when we identify with America, we are giving legitimacy to the theft of this land from its native people. We understand that, when we say "this country is as much ours as the white man's because we suffered to help make it what it is," we are both staking claim, like he is, to stolen property and taking pride in the part some of our foreparents played in helping America subjugate Native Americans and many of us have played in helping America oppress us and other people of color, both here and in other parts of the world.

But though there are problems with "African-American," it does, at least, reflect that we have a history beyond both the shores of America and the bounderies formed by the slavery period and the present. So this term, "African-American," is a step in the right direction. Some of our alleged "leaders," however, have objected to the move from "black" to "African-American" on the grounds that the change is meaningless and that it will do nothing to address any of our serious and concrete problems: drug and alcohol addiction, "black-on-black" violence, teen pregnancy, high school drop-out rates, and so forth.

This brings us to to the matter of application of the term, "African-American." If we do no more than simply call ourselves "African-Americans," we probably won't derive any concrete benefits. We have to do more than simply be Africans in a biological sense. We have to learn how to be Africans. Does that sound strange? Consider this. We, like other people in the human race and many members of the animal kingdom in general, are, to a great degree, products of our environment. Being brought up in a U.S. environment, where individualism and materialsm are the orders of the day, we tend to be individualistic and materialist. When we study the history of traditional African societies, we find out that our ancestors in Africa generally were communal-

istic and had strong spiritual values. The process of learning to be African involves such study; recognition of the fact that it was in our nature as Africans to be communalistic and to have strong spiritual values; and application of this nature to ourselves, to the way in which we live our lives. In studying Africa, we find numerous values, principles, and customs which would be useful and vital for us today. In studying Africa, we discover ourselves.

As we come to understand the significance of being African, there are things we've believed in and practices we've followed which will cease to make sense. Ideas which had been hidden from us will make themselves manifest. Questions which had never occurred to us will unexpectedly pop up. As mere "blacks," many of us practice a cynical opportunism. As Africans understanding that it is in our nature to be cooperative and communalistic and realizing that cynical opportunism is hurting us, selling crack to each other or doing other things that place our individual interests above those of our people would cease to make sense to us. As mere "blacks," we sometimes complain about discriminatory treatment of our children by the public school system but rarely even question fundamental aspects of American "education."

As Africans understanding that unhealthful messages can make the mind sick just as unhealthful food can bring ailment to the body, we will ask questions such as: Why, when schools give our offspring the "classics" to read, those "classics" never include works by African(American-born or otherwise) writers? Why do highschools in our communities offer foreign languages such as Spanish and French but not one of the more than 800 African languages--Zulu, KiSwahili, Hausa, etc.?

This move from "black" to "African-American,"

like the prior move from "negro" to "black," has implications that go far beyond just the matter of what we happen to want to call ourselves and be called. The move is political and cultural in its implications, with the degree to which this is so being determined by our seriousness and depth of understanding. In the political vein, there is the matter of party affiliation. As "blacks," many of us have been unwilling to halt our support of the Democrats and take an independent route because we can't get away from the idea that Caucasians are our saviors. As Africans, we would recognize that we have the strength, potential though it is, to be our own saviors. We would create a party run by ourselves and not tremble in fear at the possibility that we might be offending our Caucasian "saviors."

In the area of culture, we would, for example, reject "jazz" as any kind of legitimate nomenclature for the great musical tradition established and/or maintained by such masters as Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Mary Lou Williams, Max Roach, John Coltrane, and other such giants past and present. We would call this music what it is--classical music, African-American Classical Music. We would give this music the tribute it has earned and continues to earn, and we would not permit instrumental pop music, often performed by pseudo "jazz" musicians, to be confused with this complex and very spiritual improvizational music.

In short, the issue of what we call ourselves as a people is profoundly more than a matter of a name. It is a matter of who we are and what we can do. If we fail to recognize this, we will be throwing away an opportunity that we may well not be able to afford.

-Editor

FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.) is a pan-Africanist newsletter. This means that the FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any artificial distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. Therefore, references to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter the terms used therein to fit our editorial policy.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(aka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems that make effective use of imagery, that have beauty and power, and do not sacrifice such for sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme.

Send submissions to: HARAMBEE FLAME
Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.
Attn: Editor/Mondo
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE 68502-0500

From Other Sources

The Proposition 42 Controversy

..."Proposition 42 denies high school graduates athletic scholarships to Division I colleges if they fail to achieve a minimum score of 700 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test(SAT), or at least a 15 on the American College Testing(ACT) exam and maintain a "C" grade average in a high school core curriculum. The regulation is actually an amendment of Proposition 48, a measure implemented in August 1986 that stops freshmen athletes who fail to meet those SAT and grade requirements from playing or practicing with Division I teams. Under Proposition 48, affected students lose a year of play ng eligibility, but are still allowed to receive an athletic scholarship during their freshman year. Proposition 42 would eliminate the scholarship altogether.

"...But Georgetown University basketball coach John Thompson brought public attention to the issue soon after when he walked off his job for a week to protest the measure...

"Thompson's chief complaint with the proposition is that it discriminates against black and poor students, who are the major victims of substandard schooling and who therefore are less able to meet the academic requirements. These are also the very students who have little possibility of attending college without scholarship assistance, Thompson argues...

"According to Timothy Walter, a professor of physical education at the University of Michigan, there is considerable evidence that such (standardized) tests are bad predictors of future academic achievement. In a 1987 study he conducted that followed the progress of student-athletes with low SAT scores, Walter found 'the vast majority of those who would have been predicted to fail as a

function of their SAT score in fact succeeded'...

"But most responsibbe black leaders concede that Proposition 48 is a step in the right direction. It is clear to them that black collegiate athletes --particularly those playing in the 'revenue producing' sports of basketball and football--are systematically being exploited for their talent and receive neither education nor revenue for their troubles..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Another Difficult Test For Collegiate Athletics," which appears on page 6 of the March 1-14 IN THESE TIMES(Chicago, ILL).

Bill For Reparations To Africans Introduced

"'Because of the continuing state of mind of white America that blacks want something for nothing, (whites) tend to forget that we are the only people who gave to this country our work, our labor and our lives and got nothing for it', says Bill Owens, a Democratic state senator from Massachusetts.

"He has proposed a bill in the Bay State's legislature that would have Massachusetts compensate Blacks for slavery."

-Above passages excerpted from "Mass. Compensation Bill," which appears on page 16 of the 3/2/89 THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE(N.Y., N.Y.).

The "War On Drugs": Is There A Hidden Agenda?

..."The War on Drugs has a whole battle plan. Uniformed comps and plainclothes 'jump-out squads' are the occupation troops in Miami's ghettos who carry out the day-to-day assaults. Then they have their 'drug sting operations'. It is said that

Miami has set the national standards for how to carry out these raids. The Miami operation has even been featured as a cover story in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. In less than two years there have been at least sixty-six stings resulting in 4,456 arrests. Less than 1 percent of those arrested have had prior drug convictions and they have ranged in age from the very young to the very old, from the unemployed to professionals. The vast majority have been Black...Thousands of others have been picked up on other non-drug related charges, beaten or robbed. Neighborhood roadblocks and ID checks are becoming more familiar. House raids supposedly searching for drugs have become quite common. The whole scene conjures up similar assaults against Black people in very similar ghettos thousands of miles away in South Africa...

"Between July and November of 1988 there were at least four 'wrong house raids' carried out by the Metro Police in Miami, and these were just the ones that were reported. All of them were carried out under the excuse that the police were hitting 'known crack houses.'"

-Above passages excerpted from "Breaking Out Of The Miami Vice," which appears on pages 8-11 of the 2/20/89 REVOLUTIONARY WORKER(Chicago).

Libya Still On U.S. Hit List

"The Bush Administration is reportedly all set to play 'contra' in a place where it won't have to worry about opposition from the American public: Libya. Instead of arming Latino mercenaries to harass Nicaragua from bases in Honduras, the new game is to arm Africans from bases in Chad to harass Libya and eventually overthrow Muammar Khadafy

"The U.S. and Israel have set up a series of bases in Chad and other neighboring countries to train

Libyan 'contras', according to AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL, a newsletter published in London and Paris. Officers of the anti-Khadafy force are being trained by the presidential guards of several African chiefs of state whose spendthrift rule has in the past been denounced by the Libyan leader. Libyan 'contras' are being trained by Israeli or U.S. personnel at several bases in Cameroon, thanks to the particularly strong Israeli presence in that country, the newsletter said. Cameroon serves as a useful intermediary between Israel and Saudi secret services, the newsletter added, with Israel providing technical assistance and Saudi Arabia helping to finance the anti-Khadafy operation..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Khadafy Regime Being Set Up For A Contra-style Bushwacking," which appears on page 9 of the 2/15-21/89 IN THESE TIMES(Chicago, ILL).

So. African Government Continues Aggression Against Mozambique

..."Despite the promise P.W. Botha made at his September meeting with Chissano that all South African support to the MNR(Mozambique National Resistance, the South African and U.S.-supported rebel group trying to cripple Mozambique) would stop, evidence to the contrary has piled up...

"Mozambicans repatriated from South Africa have testified that white South African officers tried to coerce or bribe them into joining the MNR, and that they were detained at an MNR camp somewhere near the Kruger National Park.

"A rebel spy, Moises Macaxaze, captured in the central city of Chimoio in February, said he had been present when a South African plane flew supplies into a rebel camp on Nov. 12--two months af-

ter Botha's promises.

"All five incidents of sabotage against the transmission lines carrying electricity from South Africa to Maputo between October and January took place less than three miles from the South African border. Mozambican electricity officials are convinced the saboteurs entered from South Africa and went back there..."

-Above passages excerpted from "More False Promises Emanate From Pretoria," which appears on page 12 of the 3/1/89 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.,N.Y.).

President Of Zaire Reportedly Seeking Exile

"According to a Lisbon Commercial Radio broadcast last week monitored by the U.S. State Department, members of the Zairian opposition in Morocco say that Zairian President for Life Mobutu Sese Seko--having resigned himself to the necessity of handing over power--is exploring exile possibilities in Morocco and in Portugal...

"Portugal and Morocco are two of Mobutu's closest allies. Morocco supplied troops to help Zaire put down uprisings in 1977 and 1978, and Mobutu has collaborated with Portuguese intelligence services in aiding UNITA since the early 1970s...

"'In just the past two weeks, Zaire has been hit with widespread protests against hunger and the repression of the regime' said Nancy Ross, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Rainbow Lobby, which co-drafted legislation with California Congressman Ronald Dellums to cut off aid to Mobutu until human rights protection and democracy are established in Zaire..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Is Mobutu Seeking Exile," which appears on pages 5 and 19 of the 2/23/89 THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE.

Buthelezi Apparently Still Doing Botha's Dirty Work

"Political killings in the black townships of South Africa's Natal province have continued unabated despite the signing of a peace pact by two key factions.

"In late 1988, when the internecine killings reached an appalling rate, the anti-apartheid Congress of South African Trade Unions(Cosatu) and the triabal-based Inkatha movement, which is led by Zulu chief Mangosthu Buthelezi, signed an agreement aimed at stemming the violence. But still each day, an average of two or three people are killed in the Natal townships, with homes being gutted and people fleeing after receiving threats.

..."A Complaints Adjudication Board(CAB), which was established to monitor the peace agreement, found strong evidence that the principal violators were two local 'warlords', Shayabantu Zondi and Lawrence Zuma. Zondi had been nominated to serve as a leader of Buthelezi's KwaZulu bantustan during the period monitored by the CAB...

"According to CAB chairman C. Brocker, the violations by the two 'warlords' include 'acts of intimidation and threats of extreme violence directed against residents of the area on the grounds of

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their membership in organizations whose policies differed from those of Inkatha'. The CAB also found evidence that violence and threats were used in an attempt to force people to join Inkatha...

"The Natal Organization of Women also rejected the use of the term 'black-on-black violence' by the establishment media and the Pretoria government.

The use of the term, said Madlala(Nosiswe Madlala, President of the Natal Organization of Women), conceals the structural causes of internecine violence and its role in maintaining the existing order of South African society..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Accord Hasn't Quelled Inkatha Violence," which appears on page 15 of the 2/15/89 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.).

Agricultural Cooperatives In Mozambique Providing More Than Just Food

..."thousands(in Maputo, Mozambique) - about 11,500 in fact - have found their way out of utter poverty. They are members of a network of agricultural cooperatives founded in 1980, called the General Union of Cooperatives of the Green Zones. The organization supplies Maputo with more than 50 percent of the vegetables the city's 1 million people consume.

..."Observers say the key to the cooperatives' success has been the active participation of members in the management of the individual processing units. In socialist Mozambique, the General Union's democratic structure makes it a dynamic engine for grass-roots development.

"To its members, the General Union provides low-cost farm produce, a 25 percent discount on other foods, day care with three meals a day for young children, literacy classes, technical and leadership training, hygience and nutrition courses, health care for mothers and children, and for some, access to new housing. The 210 cooperatives also have a high school, pig and duck farms, fish ponds, a ceramics factory, bio-gas processing plants, a reforestation program, animal feed factories, and an auto mechanics' workshop.

"Because so many men have either been killed in

the war or are working in South Africa, 95 percent of the General Union's members are women...belonging to the cooperatives provides a sense of mutual support, self-esteem, and confidence in their own abilities...

"...The General Union receives development funds from sources such as the governments of Norway, Switzerland, and Canada, and private institutions like the National Council of Negro Women in the United States..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Growing Food And Pride," which appears on pages 12 and 13 of the 3/1/89 THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR.

Uganda Fighting AIDS Crisis

..."Uganda is attacking AIDS on several fronts. Two months ago, the East African nation observed World AIDS Day with a vigor previously reserved for national independence day...

Perhaps most significantly, the Ugandan government --at a time when the country is trying to recover from the devastation caused by 20 years of dictatorship and civil war--has put its influence squarely behind tde national education and prevention efforts...

"(President)Museveni has challenged political officials in Uganda to revive traditional codes of morality, apparently believing, along with some religious leaders and health workers, that changes in behavior--rather than wholesale distribution of condoms--may be the most effective weapons against the disease..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Uganda Mounts Creative Anti-AIDS Campaign," which appear on page 14 of the 3/8/89 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.).

Who Are We?

Who are we to be so special and chosen to come to a foreign land and be indoctrinated into a philosophy of destruction? Who are we?

Who are we to build a land that doesn't want us or respect us? Who are we?

Who are we to be an experiment of a society that breeds hate and racism? Who are we?

Who are we to be controlled by laws that have no justice for us? Who are we?

Who are we to be educated by a system that teaches how great a hero the white man is and how he's responsible for creating everything? Who are we?

Why were we stolen from our homeland and stripped of our heritage, our culture, our beliefs, our language? Who are we?

In this land of "milk and honey," of "opportunity" of the "free," where do we fit in? Who are we?

After all that has been taken from us and is still being taken, how can we say "We're free"? Where is our identity? Who are we? Who are we?

Hasan Muhammad

Hasan Muhammad is a member of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

Back In Time

"On May 30, 1921 a young white elevator operator, Sarah Page, accused Dick Rowland, a young Black man who worked as a shoeshine, of attacking her. The local TRIBUNE roused a racist white mob with sensational headlines announcing "To Lynch Negro Tonight." When armed Black men went to the jail, offering to protect Rowland against the mob, their assistance was refused by the sheriff, and as white racists attempted to disarm a Black veteran, a firefight broke out. When the initial fighting moved away from the courthouse, the Tulsa police deputized scores of whites, many who had been part of the lynch mob.

"The Tulsa National Guard was mobilized, and it was reported that one of the police captains was passing out guns and ammunition from a local hardware store to white racists. In the early hours of June 1 the wholesale burning and looting of Black Tulsa began, amidst continued armed resistance from the Black people. Mass arrests of Blacks were carried out at gunpoint by the National Guard, the Tulsa police, and their deputized brethren. In the early morning hours private planes dropped dynamite on the Black neighborhoods of Tulsa from the air.

"Over four thousand Black men, women, and children were herded into internment camps. Once released they were forced to carry passes or identification cards marked "Police Protection" on one side, with personal data on the back. Anyone caught on the street without a pass was subject to arrest. The number of people killed is estimated from seventy-five to three hundred, since reports of mass burials by the city made an accounting of the deaths impossible. More than 700 Black families were forced to leave Tulsa altogether, and more than 1,000 Black people were forced to live in tents throughout the winter months." -REVOLUTIONARY WORKER, 2/13/89, p. 12.

Announcements

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meetings for the months of March and April: March 7, 12, 21; 26; April 4,9, 18, 23, 30. All meetings run from 6-8 p.m. If you are interested in presenting an educational program and/or cultural performance or simply wish to attend a meeting, write to: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500. Or call 471-3161 between the hours of 12:30 and 3:00, Monday through Friday. Ask for extension 380 or 379.

The Urban League of Nebraska has various scholarship applications available to minority high school graduating seniors and undergraduate college students. Each scholarship has a different set of criteria and deadlines to be met. Students in need of financial assistance toward a higher level of education are encouraged to stop in at the Urban League Office, 2024 No. 24th St. or call 453-9730 for further information.

When you think about it...

what's the difference?